DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 001 CE 048 992

AUTHOR	Manning, Alton C.
TITLE	Adopt a School--Adopt a Business. Fastback 263.
INSTITUTION	Phi Delta Kappa Educational Foundation, Bloomington, Ind.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-87367-263-1
PUB DATE	87
NOTE	47p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Phi Delta Kappa, Eighth and Union, Box 789, Bloomington, IN 47402 ($.90).
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research/Technical (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Cooperative Programs; Education Work Relationship; Elementary Secondary Education; Guidelines; *Institutional Cooperation; Models; *Program Attitudes; Program Descriptions; Program Development; Program Implementation; Public Schools; *School Business Relationship; School Role; Success
IDENTIFIERS	*Adopt a School; Business Role; *Springfield Public Schools MO

ABSTRACT

This booklet provides information on developing and implementing a school-business relationship through its description of a successful partnership program in the Springfield, Missouri, Public Schools. The guide is organized in seven sections. The first section provides a rationale for school-business partnerships, and the second section explains how Springfield's partnership program got started. The third section outlines the brochures that the school developed for the program and how they were used successfully to recruit businesses and to implement the program. In the fourth section, successful school-business partnerships within the school system are described. The following section describes the perceptions of Springfield's Adopt-a-School program from the perspectives of the business partners, the community agencies, and the principals. The final section indicates what has been learned from the program, describes the program's strengths, and proposes some cautions for others starting similar programs. The booklet concludes with note of enthusiasm for the program. A bibliography is included. (KC)

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Adopt a School–Adopt a Business

Alton C. Manning

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Alton (Al) C. Manning is director of Pupil and Community Services in the Springfield, Missouri, Public Schools. He has been a teacher, counselor, junior high principal, and director of pupil personnel services. He also has taught at Drury College in Springfield. Manning's undergraduate education was at Southwest Missouri State University; his graduate degrees are from the University of Arkansas.

Manning has served on committees and boards of local, state, and national organizations, including vice president of the Missouri Congress of Parents and Teachers from 1972 to 1974, and member of the Board of Trustees of the National Association of Pupil Personnel Administrators from 1980 to 1983.

In 1983 Manning assumed responsibility for implementing the Adopt-a-School partnership concept in the Springfield Public Schools in cooperation with the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. This program has received national recognition and serves as a model for school districts interested in establishing school-business partnerships.

Series Editor, Derek L. Burleson

Adopt a School – Adopt a Business

by
Alton C. Manning

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 87-61737
ISBN 0-87367-263-1
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Bloomington, Indiana

This fastback is sponsored by the University of Tennessee Chapter of Phi Delta Kappa, which made a generous contribution toward publication costs.

The chapter sponsors this fastback to honor Paul Wishart, Professor Emeritus of Science Education and Curriculum, for his 37 years of active and dedicated service to the University of Tennessee Chapter.

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Introduction

In the days of the one-room school, the schoolhouse was the focal point of the community. It served not only as the place where children learned the three R's but also as a place for community meetings and social events such as box suppers and dances, and sometimes even for church services. Everyone knew the teacher because usually someone in the community provided her room and board. The community knew what was being taught in the curriculum and realized what resources were needed. A spirit of cooperation prevailed.

Things have changed. As communities grew, consolidated schools were established with fleets of buses bringing students long distances from their homes. The curriculum has become more complex and more difficult for the average parent to understand. Teachers have become better prepared and through their professional organizations have demanded higher salaries and better working conditions. And all these changes have raised the costs of education – costs paid for by taxpayers.

To educators, the changes in our schools mentioned above represent progress. But progress takes its toll. With consolidation of schools, community spirit has declined. The community feels out of touch with its schools. With a more sophisticated curriculum, parents and others begin to treat with suspicion what they do not understand. With the rise in teacher militancy, citizens begin to question whether teachers are placing their own interests above the interests

of children. When discontent escalates, citizens repond where it hurts most – by defeating school levies and, in some states, by mobilizing wholesale taxpayer revolts.

This brief historical overview of the changing nature of public schools serves as a background for current efforts to recapture the spirit of cooperation – efforts by committed educators and concerned citizens to build channels of communication that lead to better understanding of and greater support for our schools. One such effort is the school-business partnership concept. This fastback will describe the partnership program in Springfield, Missouri, Public Schools. But first, let us look briefly at the history of school-business partnerships and how they contribute to improving our schools and communities.

Why School-Business Partnerships?

Schools belong to the community, and the community expects its schools to prepare students to contribute to its economic well-being and quality of life. This requires a close working relationship between the schools and other constituencies in a community, especially its business and industry.

In the hostile climate of the late Sixties and early Seventies, some far-sighted educators, along with some national organizations and local government leaders, realized that one way to help improve this environment was to create school-community partnerships. Large metropolitan areas (Dallas, San Diego, Denver, Houston, Memphis, Atlanta, and Washington, D.C., to name a few) took the lead with a variety of partnership programs. One of the common forms of partnership was the Adopt-a-School program, in which a school was paired with a business, industry, or community agency. Other forms of partnership include community volunteers, talent resource pools, mentoring programs, school foundations, and homework hotlines. Some of these early partnerships have grown to maturity and have provided millions of children with improved and enriched educational opportunities.

By the late Seventies and early Eighties, as the partnership idea became better known, support came from other sources. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce provided much leadership and promoted the partnership concept at its conferences. Professional education associ-

ations realized the potential of partnership programs and began to promote the idea. Support from the federal government came from the U.S. Department of Education and the White House when, in October 1983, President Reagan launched the National Partnership in Education Program. Such high-level interest helped to generate further support for an idea that needed to be reviewed, embraced, and implemented.

The core idea underlying school partnerships is the involvement of community members in a variety of school activities. Those involved, including many who do not have children in school, are able to experience firsthand many of the good things the schools are doing. They also come to understand better some of the problems facing the schools and to support the efforts of educators to solve those problems. Involvement is the key to understanding. With understanding comes increased public confidence and support.

School partnerships help to build a positive image of schools in the community. Those employed in businesses participating in a school partnership come to have good feelings about "their" school. They know what is going on. A family spirit develops. When schools have a positive image, taxpayers are much more willing to support them when a bond levy appears on the ballot or a tax rate increase is requested.

Not the least of benefits from school-business partnerships are the special resources that businesses can provide schools to enhance and enrich the learning program. Some of these are material resources, but perhaps more important are the human resources from businesses – people who provide youngsters with a meaningful association with adults other than their parents and teachers. In addition to the knowledge and skills these persons bring to the classroom is the information they provide about their businesses, thus expanding students' awareness of career choices.

It is important to remember that school-business partnerships are a reciprocal relationship. Schools also have much to offer the business community in the form of programs and services. Hence the title of this fastback, *Adopt a School – Adopt a Business*.

How Springfield's Partnership Program Got Started

In 1981, when Paul J. Hagerty became superintendent of the Springfield Public Schools, he brought with him the idea of school-business partnerships, more specifically, the Adopt-a-School program. He knew it had worked successfully in other school systems, and he had some experience with the program in former positions. When he first mentioned the concept, it did not generate immediate interest. However, it was not rejected; people simply needed more time to understand the concept better. It needed some time to germinate. Most new ideas and practices do not gain immediate acceptance. People need to consider an idea carefully before they embrace it.

At the annual superintendent-board of education planning retreat held in early summer of 1983, the partnership concept came up for discussion once again. The group decided that the time was right to pursue the idea. Since I had a long history of liaison efforts with various agencies and organizations in the community, including the Chamber of Commerce, I was given staff responsibility for coordinating the project.

At the outset we felt it important to involve the Chamber of Commerce as co-sponsor. Since the chamber represented almost all the businesses in the community, its support was necessary to gain credibility in the business community for what the public schools were trying to achieve with this program. Because of a long-established working relationship between the schools and the Chamber of Com-

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merce, its endorsement was easily obtained. We immediately began to prepare a brochure that could be used to to help us market the concept to the individual businesses in the community.

After further consultation with the chamber staff, we decided to pilot the project during the 1983-84 school year. Our plan was to establish five or six partnerships the first year, which we felt would provide an adequate test of the concept. Letters carrying the superintendent's signature were sent to about a dozen of Springfield's major firms with the message that we would like to schedule a visit at their offices to discuss a project involving them and the public schools. In each case the letters were addressed to the chief executive officers of the firms selected. This was deliberate. It is important that the initial contact be between the head of the corporation and the head of the school district, because only at this level can decisions ultimately be made. A few days after mailing the letters, the superintendent's secretary phoned to make appointments for us to discuss the possibility of establishing a partnership program, such as the Adopt-a-School plan.

Superintendent Hagerty and I visited each of the firms contacted in July and early August of 1983. We structured the visits to last not more than 30 minutes, recognizing that chief executive officers are busy people and to indicate to them that we, too, were on a tight schedule. The visits could be brief because we were not pressing for an answer; we were just presenting the concept, answering any questions, and leaving the brochure. We emphasized the involvement of the Chamber of Commerce to indicate the high level of cooperation between public and private sectors of the community. We described the benefits of the program for the businesses involved, covering such topics as the enhancement of the company's image in the community and the opportunity for the company and its employees to become involved in community service projects. We then explained that the school district's purpose was to make more citizens in the community knowledgeable about what was happening in their schools. We

pointed out that increasingly there are many adults in the community who have no children in school and thus have no personal contact with the schools. Their attitudes and opinions about education are based on what they see and hear in the national media, which does not necessarily represent what is happening in their own schools. They need to see the good job that is being done and to help make it even better. Basically, this was the message we gave to the chief executive officers to consider before giving us a firm answer as to whether they might want to become involved.

About two weeks later, corporate officers were contacted again, either by telephone or in person, to find out if they would like to participate in the program or if there were some reason that prevented their participation at this time. Nearly all agreed to join in the effort. One of the factors in their decision was our promise up front that we were not seeking funds from them. No doubt several agreed simply to see how anything could be successful that did not cost money. The few who did not feel they could participate had legitimate reasons: one was in the middle of a strike; another was going through a corporate merger. Since that time, some of these firms have joined the project.

One of the interesting things that happened during this initial stage was that some of the chief executive officers contacted began talking about the partnership idea with their friends in other firms that we had not contacted. We started receiving calls from these corporate leaders requesting us to come and tell them about the program. Naturally, we were more than willing to present the idea to them. But we did have some concern that if the program became too big in the first year, we would not be able to structure and administer it properly. We decided to take that risk and welcomed all who were interested. The only requirement was that they be members of the Chamber of Commerce. By the time we were ready to start the 1983-84 school year, instead of having five or six partnerships in our pilot, we had 20! The idea was so practical, so reasonable, so simple that it had already begun to sell itself.

The next step was the implementation process, involving the matching of each business with an individual school building. We developed some guidelines for the matching. For example, we felt that geographic proximity was important so that the firm's employees would not spend too much travel time to get to "their" school. We decided that it probably would be best to pair businesses with elementary schools first. Adults tend to be impressed by younger children; and children are more impressionable and accepting of adults than are adolescents. The first schools we selected were those that, in our judgment, had a greater need for positive adult role models. We also made an effort to pair schools with businesses whose employees did not have children attending that school. As things worked out, some of these guidelines were compromised in order not to lose a strong business partner that clearly had some unique resources to offer the program.

The principals of the schools to be involved in the program were not told about it until after the fact. In retrospect, this was probably a mistake; they should have been more involved from the beginning. The reason for this, however, was timing. They were not on the job during the summer weeks when it was decided to undertake the program. However, as soon as the school year began, the superintendent called a meeting of the principals and sold them on the concept. The principals quickly realized the potential of the program for broadening children's learning opportunities and for the general support it would provide their schools. They accepted the challenge enthusiastically and started to work to make each partnership a success.

The process of implementation took a considerable amount of time and leg work. We suggested that each business put together a team of interested employees under the leadership of a middle-management person, who would act as liaison between the business and its partner school. In some cases, the chief executive officers were so enthusiastic about the project that they took on the liaison function themselves. In the schools the principal appointed a faculty commit-

tee to coordinate the partnership activities. In some cases, the principal personally took charge of the program. The designated representatives from the businesses and the schools met during the opening weeks of school to plan activities that would get the partnership off to a good start. Meetings were held at both the schools and the businesses so that people could get to know each other on their own territory and to establish open lines of communication. It was made clear at the outset that the partnership concept would not work if either partner sat back and waited to hear from the other. After these initial implementation meetings, each partnership had the flexibility to grow and develop as the persons involved felt appropriate. Only a minimal amount of direction, supervision, or administration was provided beyond that stage.

Early in the 1983-84 school year, we held a press conference at the Chamber of Commerce offices to announce the Adopt-a-School program. One of the promises we had made to the participating businesses was that we would get them as much publicity as possible. We have continued this practice. The media have been very receptive to reporting partnership activities in this community and have provided good coverage. This is important to all parties involved.

During the first year, enrollment of new partnerships was allowed if a business indicated interest; and by the end of the year four more were added. The same process of contacting potential business partners used the first summer was repeated during July and August of 1984, and several new ones were added. Again, the new partners were announced at a press conference shortly after the beginning of the 1984-85 school year. Six more were added during that school year. The same process was repeated during the summer of 1985; and by the time of the press conference in late September, only two schools did not have a partner. By Thanksgiving all schools had a partner. We now were ready to move into phase two of the Adopt-a-School program, involving multiple pairings. We are still in this phase, which, when completed, will provide from three to as many as six or eight

partners for each school, depending on the size of the school's enrollment.

The idea of multiple pairings was a natural evolution of our program. During the initial stage, our goal was to recruit one business partner for each school. It seemed logical to approach the larger corporations first, because they would be more likely to have the personnel with time to carry out the partnership activities. With that goal accomplished, we realized that many smaller retail business members of the Chamber of Commerce also could participate. Their involvement might be more limited but very helpful, nevertheless. To carry out this phase of adding multiple partners could take several years. A spinoff of the multiple pairing idea could be the Adopt-a-Student program. Under such a plan a business would be paired with a single student throughout his or her public school career and provide needed assistance and guidance to help the youngster become a productive citizen in the community.

This chapter has provided a brief look at how one school system launched its school-business partnership program. (Also see fastback 226 *How to Start a School/Business Partnership*.) The next chapter provides specifics about how the Springfield Adopt-a-School program was implemented.

Our Brochures Tell the Story

As every good salesman knows, when attempting to sell a product, it is important not only to be well informed about the product but also to leave something in the hands of prospective customers for them to refer to after the salesman has left the scene. We followed this advice as we prepared to sell our Adopt-a-School program. The brochure we designed was left with the corporation officers we visited and also was placed in schools and the Chamber of Commerce office.

In a few short sentences, the brochure tells the reader what the Adopt-a-School program is, why a business should adopt a school, and why a school should adopt a business. In a nutshell, it tells prospective partners what they and the schools can do that will be mutually beneficial. The opening paragraphs in the brochure provide a brief rationale:

> Adopt a School is an educational partnership involving the Springfield Public Schools and the broader Springfield community. It is designed to expand learning opportunities for children and youth by bringing the resources of teachers and community leaders together in a common effort. Of significance, also, is the intent that the program will make individuals more aware of their public schools. It also provides an opportunity for the businesses to enhance their image from the standpoint of community service.
>
> Specifically, it creates a structure that allows a special relationship to develop between personnel from a particular business and the stu-

dents and staff of a single school. Activities are then agreed upon that are uniquely appropriate to that individual partnership. To some extent, it becomes both an Adopt-a-School as well as an Adopt-a-Business concept with benefits flowing in both directions.

When using the brochure in presentations, we put it in context by explaining the school district's overall goal represented by the acronym CARE. The *C* stands for "community involvement," which is vitally important to the operation of a successful school system. The Adopt-a-School program gives meaning to that phrase. The *A* stands for "appraisal of performance." This phrase pertains more to students and staff, but it also includes the continuing evaluation needed for a successful Adopt-a-School program. The benefits resulting from the program certainly help to improve our schools' performance. The *R* stands for "rigorous curriculum." With the extended resources made available through the partnership program, the curriculum is enriched. The *E* stands for "excellence in every effort." Once again, the high level of cooperation demonstrated by the community helps to bring about excellence in education.

A second brochure we use is a guide for participating organizations. Written in an upbeat style, it begins:

> So you want to adopt a school? Terrific! An organization's involvement with a public school can be delightful – and highly rewarding for the children, their teachers, and you! . . . This publication is designed to give you some guidance in carrying out a meaningful program with an adopted school. If you're wondering about the kinds of activities that might be appropriate, use the section on Creative Ideas as a springboard. The Guidelines that follow will help you get the program going and keep it going. Now, get ready to enjoy an exciting new relationship with Springfield's children.

The brochure has sections devoted to program ideas, how to recruit volunteers, locating resources, monitoring and evaluating the program, and the importance of maintaining communication.

With attractive and informative brochures, teachers, students, parents, prospective business partners, and members of the community all can learn more about the school-business partnership concept. They can be used for promoting the Adopt-a-School program in the local community and for publicizing the program statewide and nationally.

Single copies of the two brochures described above are available by writing to:

Alton C. Manning, Director
Pupil and Community Services
Springfield Public School
940 North Jefferson
Springfield, MO 65802
(417) 864-3841

Another key element in the success of our Adopt-a-School program was the cooperation and support from the Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce. The chamber of commerce in any community exists to support its local businesses. A decision by the chamber to become involved in any new program must be in the best interests of its dues-paying membership. Enlightened business leaders know that good schools are good for business. Good schools prepare well-qualified workers for the community's business and industry; good schools help to attract new businesses to a community.

Because of a long history of cooperation between the Springfield Public Schools and the Chamber of Commerce, it was not difficult to convince the chamber's staff about the merits of the school partnership program and to enlist it as co-sponsor of the program. The major questions asked were how much staff time would be involved and how much extra funding would be required. When assurance was given that the Springfield Public Schools would provide the staff time and necessary operating expenses, the chamber quickly endorsed the program.

The chamber's involvement with the program from its beginning gave it credibility in the business community. It continues to support

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the program in many ways and uses it as an example of the cooperative community spirit in Springfield to recruit new businesses to the area. Any school system contemplating some form of school-business partnership program should enlist the support of the local chamber of commerce. It can be a great ally.

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Success Stories: Programs in Action

During the four years the Adopt-a-School program has been operating in Springfield, exciting things have happened – many of them unanticipated. The statistics regarding the number of schools, children, teachers, businesses, and community members involved are impressive. But no statistics can capture the good feelings resulting from this people-to-people program. This chapter presents a sampling of the activities conducted in the program. They serve as examples of what can happen when the imagination and creativity of people are unleashed.

Litton Systems, Inc., Advanced Circuitry Division – Hillcrest High School

Students, staff, and Litton employees cooperated to raise funds to help a local fire department purchase a piece of lifesaving equipment.

American National Property and Casualty Company – Glendale High School

Company executives visited classrooms to discuss the skills they expected of new employees for various jobs.

American Red Cross, Greene County Chapter – Jarrett Junior High School

Students served as volunteers at the Blood Center, also recruited donors and made arrangements for them to come to the school to donate blood.

Americana Fremont – Phelps Center for the Gifted

Students, staff, and employees worked together to raise funds for the local Ronald McDonald House.

Boatmen's Bank of Springfield – Glendale High School

Bank employees served as judges for the high school debate tournament.

Boatmen's Bank of Springfield (Branch) – Field Elementary School

The bank sponsored a Christmas tree decorating contest and provided a $50 savings bond for the student constructing the best ornament.

Browning-Ferris Industries – Bissett Elementary School

The company provided prizes for a Reading Rodeo.

Carol Jones Realtors – Holland Elementary School

Students designated as "good citizens" were photographed and their photos were included each week in the company's Sunday newspaper ad.

Centerre Bank – Cherokee School

Bank personnel assisted with the PTA fund-raising activity and worked with school personnel in producing a videotape to promote the Adopt-a-School concept in the banking industry.

Coldwell Banker Vanguard Realtors – Field Elementary School

The company provided a pizza party for the classroom that showed the most improvement in grades from one quarter to the next.

Commerce Bank – Fairview-Watkins Elementary School

Bank employees provided a carry-in breakfast for honor roll students each quarter.

Cox Medical Center North – Pipkin Junior High School

The school choir sang Christmas carols for patients at the medical center.

Cox Medical Center South – Kickapoo High School

Hospital laboratory facilities were made available for advanced science students doing independent projects for class credit.

Students at Cherokee School present a banner to Larry Burbank, president of Centerre Bank of Springfield, to thank his company for being their partner.

Daybreak Adult Day Care – Cowden Elementary School

Adults at the day-care facility made crafts to sell at the school's fund-raising activity.

Dayco Corporation – Reed Junior High School

The manufacturing division provided student-faculty tours of its production lines.

Don Wessel Olds-Honda, Inc. – Wanda Gray Elementary School

The company worked with the staff to establish a motivation program designed to help students improve both personally and academically.

Drury College – Boyd Elementary School

The college basketball team ate lunch with students in fourth, fifth, and sixth grades and served as positive role models for the students.

Empire Bank – Pittman Elementary School

Bank employees collected can labels, which could be exchanged for athletic equipment for the school. Also, the bank provided the local newspaper and magazine for the school library.

Evangel College – Tefft-Weller Elementary School

Selected students from the college adopted a "pal" student at the elementary school.

Famous Barr Department Store – Sequiota Elementary School

The store provided students with attendance awards.

First City National Bank – Cowden Elementary School

In each student's first quarter report card, the bank put a new penny attached to a note wishing them a "shiny" successful new year.

Foster's Nursing Home – Weaver Elementary School

Residents from the home had lunch at school as a part of their Adopt-a-Grandparent program.

General Electric Company – Wilder Elementary School

Employees helped students, staff, and parents fill and deliver Christmas baskets for the needy. Also, the school staff recognized an employee of the plant for 20 years of service.

Great Southern Savings and Loan Assn. – McGregor Elementary School

Employees donated books to the school library.

Harry Cooper Supply Company – Graff Area Vocational-Technical Center

Trade classes toured the company to get a better understanding of how the various trades work with a building supply company.

Heer's, Inc. – Parkview High School

The company worked with the school to produce a student folder, which was given to each student at the beginning of the school year.

Howard Johnson's Motor Lodge – Pepperdine Elementary School

Two honor students and their teacher received a free meal at the motel's restaurant.

IBM Corporation – Pipkin Junior High School

A company employee conducted a Chrysallis Program (instruction in manners and etiquette) at school for members of the Honor Society.

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Jones and Company Realtors – Horace Mann Elementary School

The company published "The Brown Bag Cookbook," which the students wrote.

KDEB Channel 27 – Bowerman Elementary School

The TV station taped students who served as weather spotters and used the tapes in its weather reports and its afternoon children's shows.

KGBX Radio – York Elementary School

The station provides trophies to recognize the "Student of the Month."

KOLR Channel 10 – Kickapoo High School

A "Kids Beat" news broadcast prepared and presented by students is used as a part of the station's newscast.

Principal Jane Hancock and Kathy Jones of Jones and Company Realtors help students from Horace Mann School to unpack copies of "The Brow Bag Cookbook," which was written by the students and published by the corporate partner.

Kraft, Inc. – Central High School

Company employees joined the school in fund-raising activities to provide a $1,000 student scholarship.

KY-3 – Portland Elementary School

The television station broadcasts announcements of various school activities.

Landmark Bank – Jeffries Elementary School

The bank provided assistance in purchasing and planting trees to landscape the school grounds.

Lily-Tulip, Inc. – Bingham Elementary School

Employees promoted, participated in, and provided prizes for the Bingham TV Black-Out.

Mercantile Bank – Jarrett Junior High School

The bank created and presented perfect-attendance buttons to 239 students at the end of the first quarter.

Metropolitan National Bank – Hickory Hills School

The school's "Citizens-of-the-Month" had lunch with bank officials and toured the facilities.

Mt. Vernon Park Care Center – Westport Elementary School

Students had lunch with residents at the center and learned about the residents' careers in their earlier years.

Ozark Grocer Company – Pleasant View School

The company "showcases" student work in its office and provides career information to students.

Paul Mueller Company – Study School

The school's music department provided entertainment for plant employees at Christmas.

Ramada Hotel-Hawthorne Park – Shady Dell Elementary School

Students toured the hotel, prepared "goodies" under the supervision of the chef, and served them to their parents in the evening.

St. John's Regional Health Center – Delaware Elementary School

The students prepared art work for the Sisters of Mercy.

St. John's Regional Health Center – Sunshine Elementary School
The hospital presented "We Care About Kids" buttons to students.

Southwest Missouri State University – Rountree Elementary School
University students taught French to elementary students.

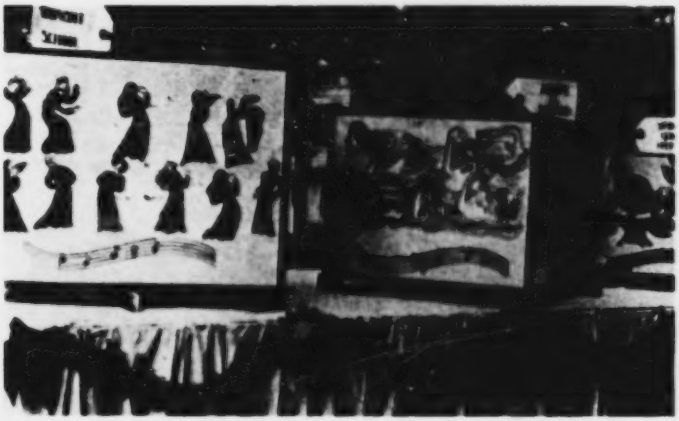
Southwestern Bell Telephone – Mark Twain Elementary School
The company recognized students for perfect attendance.

Springfield Community Hospital – Disney Elementary School
The hospital provided CPR training for the PTA.

Springfield General Hospital – Fremont Elementary School
Employees, staff, and students decorated a float for the Christmas parade, which won first place.

Springfield Newspapers, Inc. – Fairbanks Elementary School
The newspaper conducted a successful pen pal activity.

Springfield Office Supply – Reed Junior High School
The firm provided a plaque for the "Student-of-the-Year."



This float, constructed by students at Fremont School and employees of Springfield General Hospital, won first place in its division at the Downtown Springfield Christmas Parade.

Springfield Park Central Hospital – Campbell Elementary School
The hospital provided the school staff with an inservice program dealing with children with attention deficit disorders.

State Bank of Southwest Missouri – Wilder Elementary School
Bank employees provided a morning newspaper for teachers and support staff at the school.

Syntex Agribusiness – Sherwood Elementary School
Employees of the firm painted a portion of the school's interior.

Thompson Auto Sales – Doling Elementary School
Employees helped with the school's Christmas Basket project.

3M Company – Shady Dell Elementary School
The firm recognized students for academic achievement.

United Missouri Bank – Pershing School
Bank employees served as "shadows" for students who were learning about banking careers.

University Plaza Hotel – Weaver Elementary School
The hotel provided "pool parties" for students at the hotel pool.

Wal-Mart Store #86 – Williams Elementary School
The store donated items for the school's fund-raising activity.

Zenith Electronics Corporation – Robberson Elementary School
Employees collected or donated items for the school's annual auction, which brings in about $2,000 for student needs. They also did the auctioneering and clerking.

The activities described above represent only a sampling of what is going on in Springfield's partnership program. They were selected to show the variety of organizations participating, including colleges, community agencies such as the American Red Cross, hospitals, and nursing homes as well as commercial firms. The programs or services provided take different forms, with many emphasizing student achievements and employee accomplishments. Note also the reciprocal nature of some programs where students provide musical entertain-

ment or TV weather reports for their partners. Central to all the partnership programs is the involvement of the community in activities beneficial to children and youth.

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Partner Perceptions of Springfield's Adopt-a-School Program

The success of a school-business partnership program depends greatly on developing a close working relationship with the partners. This requires constant and continuing communication from the schools and feedback from their partners. This chapter includes verbatim testimony from some of the participants in the program. Some of them are charter members of Springfield's Adopt-a-School program; others are newcomers. The testimonies are from business partners, from community agency partners, and from principals of participating schools. Taken as a whole, the testimonies serve as one form of evaluation for the Adopt-a-School program in Springfield.

Business Partners' Perceptions

The first commentary is from the director of industrial relations of a nationally known manufacturer, which is paired with Hillcrest High School.

I think the real benefit to our operation as well as to the community will be in the future when the students become part of the work force. We all benefit if these students are better prepared to accept responsibilities of the business world. The importance of the Adopt-a-School program is strengthened more when we remember that a large percentage of high school students will not continue their education. They will assume posi-

tions in the work force as production and service employees; therefore, any exposure to the actual working environment will hopefully give them a more realistic view of business and industries as they make their career decisions.

The chief executive officer of a local network television affiliate, which is paired with Kickapoo High School, comments:

Our station is one of the old-timers when it comes to the Adopt-a-School program, and I have a high degree of support and belief in the concept of adopting a school. In our case, I wanted to adopt a high school because I wanted to be in a position to try to positively influence youngsters who were aiming toward majoring in broadcasting when they went to college. By letting them come to the television station, they had an opportunity to see professionals at work and receive some hands-on experience. Broadcasting is one of those fields that requires a lot of practical experience. Unfortunately, I find not only high schools but, in particular, universities that are treating this as a theoretical business. It should be taught by people who are working in their respective fields and that should parallel the courses that are being taught. By launching some of these youngsters in the proper direction, I feel that I am contributing in a small way not only to their betterment but to those of us in the broadcasting industry. Finally, I feel it is important that the young people of today be exposed to business, how it works, and the fact that no one can do anything in business without revenues. In effect, we're teaching business principles in a very small way as we go. We are looking forward to going into our fifth year as a member of the Springfield Public School Adopt-a-School program.

The director of operations at the local Zenith electronics plant comments on the company's relationship with Robberson Elementary School:

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Zenith has been involved for four years in the program. It has involved a number of people from three areas, Zenith, Robberson School, and the PTA. As with similar programs, it has groups working toward mutual goals with rewarding results.

The impression made on the children during their formative years by people working together to provide them with events and things not normally available will be lasting. It has been good for Zenith to have these children sing at Christmas, provide letters of thanks, and art work for our cafeteria. It brings us closer to the realization that something extra can be created with our participation.

Springfield also gains as each company works with, is more aware of, and is very proud of the school it has adopted. It is because of the close working relationship that business and industry have a better understanding of the school's needs. The payback from a personal standpoint is when you see the smiles and read the thanks from the children of the school.

The partnership program coordinator at Metropolitan National, which is paired with Hickory Hills School, writes:

As we complete our third year in the Adopt-a-School program, we want to thank you for the opportunity to be involved in these successful partnerships of education and business. Most of us at Metropolitan are from small southwest Missouri towns. The Adopt-a-School program enables us to cooperate with "our school" much as we would do with the one-school district in a small town. We have had hundreds of Hickory Hills students visit the bank, such as members of choral groups, classroom groups, individuals being honored for outstanding achievement, etc. Bank employees have participated in both classroom and extracurricular activities at Hickory Hills. We have worked with the Parent-Teacher Association on various fund-raising projects.

We sincerely hope that our participation in the Adopt-a-School program has helped and enriched public education in Springfield. We feel the young people of our community are our greatest resource.

The location manager of the Southwest Marketing Division of IBM, which is paired with Pipkin Junior High School, comments:

As you know, I have only the experience of one year in this program; however, it has been one of many enlightenments and feelings of accomplishment. At first, we were apprehensive about our ability to really contribute to Pipkin Junior High, and just as importantly, would my employees gain a feeling of accomplishment. We have done both.

I think the key is involvement on-site at the school with teachers and students. You quickly find out there are many things one can do individually and as a company. The needs of the school are many and – most generally – simple ones that take only time and do not involve complicated programs. The students want plain, simple, business world experience and examples and appreciation for their accomplishments. It is not difficult to provide this. Based upon our experience last year, I feel we can be more productive next year.

The president of Centerre Bank of Springfield writes about its partnership with Cherokee School:

I believe the benefits to our operation have been far beyond our initial hopes when the program first began four years ago. Our particular partnership is one of extreme closeness that permits the bank and Cherokee School to operate as a real team. Our new-found relationships with educators and students have broadened our perspective of the goals, obstacles, successes, and failures of the educational system and how we are affected both corporately and privately by our citizenship or lack of citizenship.

As we have found during the past year, more and more communities are becoming aware of the success of our Adopt-a-School program. I feel that building a strong bond between education and business will ensure a foundation upon which can be built a stronger sense of community, mutual needs and concerns, and satisfactory resolutions to the problems and tasks of the future.

Community Agency Partners' Perceptions

While the business segment of the community was and is the target group recruited to participate in the Adopt-a-School program, there are other participants that also have become successful partners, including community agencies, hospitals, and higher education institutions.

One of the most interesting partnerships to watch develop has been the one between the Greene County Chapter of the American Red Cross and Jarrett Junior High School. The director of the Office of Public Relations writes:

The relationship the American Red Cross has experienced in the program with Jarrett Junior High School has been beneficial for both mutual understanding and assistance. Our agency has felt a spirit of pride in becoming involved with the school through providing special programs and speakers, displaying the students' artwork, and having the students volunteering in the Blood Services.

Benefits to the community are both immediate and future. The students and staff became deeply involved in the first bloodmobile conducted in the community in a junior high school. Since the students were too young to donate blood, they recruited blood donors from their families, neighbors, and the school staff. It was successful not only by numbers of donors who gave, but also the students who became involved will be the donors of

the future and the volunteers in the community because they care!

Our organization has found the Adopt-a-School program to be positive in every way, and the staff time of our organization's involvement is considered an investment.

St. John's Regional Health Center is one of Springfield's more ambitious partners, having accepted pairings with two schools: Delaware Elementary School and Sunshine Elementary School. It also maintains a partner relationship with the Catholic schools in Springfield. Spokespersons of St. John's Office of Community Services have identified the following ways the partnerships are important and beneficial to the Health Center and to the community:

Gives Health Center employees a better understanding of the issues faced by the school system.

Provides students and teachers with a better understanding of health care and the issues it faces.

Provides St. John's with an opportunity to add to the schools' curriculum by means of speakers and presentations on health-related topics.

Gives both the Health Center and schools a sense of pride and achievement.

Provides new opportunities for teachers by allowing them to call upon Health Center resources.

Allows the Health Center to achieve one of its missions and goals – to be of service to others.

Exposes students to vast career opportunities in health care.

Allows Health Center employees to utilize talents, such as public speaking, that often go unused during the normal workday situation. Also provides opportunity for employees to earn required community service hours.

Drury College, a private liberal arts institution, has developed a productive partnership with Boyd Elementary School located just a block away from its campus. A spokesperson for the college writes:

Drury became involved at the beginning of the Adopt-a-School program. From our standpoint, the relationship with Boyd has been a natural because of our own interest in teacher preparation and our concern to be involved in supporting our neighborhood and community. I think that all of us at the college have a better understanding of the programs going on in the Springfield Schools, and perhaps we've been able to contribute to these programs in Boyd School. I'm sure that other schools throughout the district have benefited greatly by the contributions and support received from their Adopt-a-School partner.

It seems to me that one of the great benefits to the school district is the significant increase in understanding and knowledge about the programs in the schools. There is no substitute for direct involvement with people in really getting to know a program, and Springfield Schools have been involved with many key people in this community through the Adopt-a-School effort. This close involvement has to have many second- and third-order benefits besides those associated with the program itself.

Drury College has been pleased to participate, and we look forward to continuing.

Principals' Perceptions

The following comments are from principals expressing their perceptions from the school's side of the partnership. They are no less enthusiastic than those presented by spokespersons from business, industry, and community institutions or agencies. Each expresses the uniqueness of the partnership relationship for her school.

The principal of Sunshine Elementary School writes about her school's relationship with St. John's Regional Health Center:

The Adopt-a-School partnership program has certainly made an impression upon me as a first-year principal. I am continually amazed at the physical and financial support that St. John's

Regional Health Center continues to give Sunshine Elementary . . . expecting little in return.

The physical contribution has been most obvious in our "Good Citizens" quarterly tours of the hospital facilities. This activity involves approximately 100 students during a school year. At this time, St. John's provides financial support by treats, both edible and wearable ones, consisting of masks, bandaids, etc.

The letters of congratulations to Sunshine students with perfect attendance from St. John's is a real boost to children's self-esteem. Other events included a skit about Halloween safety presented by student nurses, "We Care" buttons for all students on the first day of school, and candy canes during the December holiday season.

The classrooms at Sunshine are responsible for showing their appreciation each month with some type of artwork. Many times these tray decorations, cards, banners, door knob decorations, etc., were delivered to Mercy Villa, a nursing home affiliated with St. John's, for their patients to enjoy. Our monthly newsletter publicly thanks St. John's for its support. An open-door policy to all of our activities, including eating lunch at school, is a standard practice at Sunshine.

I'm very pleased with our partnership and especially the exposure to career opportunities that are present. The Adopt-a-School partnership program offers our students and business leaders of today an opportunity to work together before tomorrow!

The principal of Bingham Elementary School expresses feelings of sincere warmth as she relates her school's experiences with Lily Tulip:

I have thoroughly enjoyed being involved with Springfield's Adopt-a-School Program. As you know, I worked with the Columbia Schools in a supervisory capacity for several years. When I visited schools in Columbia, I had an opportunity to ob-

serve the operation of the Adopt-a-School Program. Of course, I had ideas of my own as to possibilities in a school/industry relationship.

With this being my first year with responsibility for implementation of my school's Adopt-a-School program, I want you to know I felt as if I had a real buddy or friend out in the community by having connections with a business that cared about Bingham School. Our Adopt-a-School Steering Committee met monthly, and every idea we brainstormed was seen as a possibility for our students. All year, I had a special feeling inside when students identified with the name Lily Tulip because of the work of the Steering Committee.

I went shopping with an employee from Lily for picnic tables for Bingham. I always thought most men hated shopping. He selected the cutest tables and a very serviceable barbecue grill. I only got to select one item – a park bench with the $30 remaining. It was obvious he was proud of his choices, and he delivered the merchandise that evening and stayed at school until 8 p.m. with a Bingham parent putting everything together. The neat thing was that it was not the individual, but that through him, Lily Tulip loved our school enough to give time and energy for this project. He even said to me, "You be sure to tell everyone about the Lily Tulip Circle – the Bingham picnic area."

Our students who earn "Good Citizen" awards feel it is an honor to go to Lily to display artwork or to deliver treats. The Lily employees, many of whom are nearing retirement, love making a fuss over the students and enjoy the artwork and the treats from the students. According to the personnel director, Lily employees often comment about the visits of Bingham students. Every person likes to be recognized and likes to feel that he/she belongs to someone or something. Bingham and Lily have definitely given the message that we belong to each other.

The Lily employees are members of the community-at-large. I, personally, appreciate having someone from Lily stop me when I'm out shopping to say, "You're from Bingham, aren't you?" Again, it is a sense of pride and good feeling to have a Lily employee dialoguing about Bingham. All of my life my parents preached, "We are here in this world to help each other." The Adopt-a-School Program is a way that children and adults can show service to one another. It presents a model that there really are Big Brothers or Big Sisters who care and will render assistance. It is a model of altruism.

The principal of Jarrett Junior High School writes about her school's partnership with the Greene County Chapter of the American Red Cross:

Reflecting on the Adopt-a-School program is a pleasant task for me. This year has been a particularly exhilarating one in terms of our relationship with the American Red Cross. This partnership epitomizes what I feel the true essence of the program should be, and that is reciprocation. The Jarrett staff and students have reaped many benefits from this relationship, but I will try to highlight those that stand out in my mind. The most important benefit is the realization on both parts that we can be mutually productive. Jarrett can bring youth, enthusiasm, and a hunger for knowledge to the Red Cross. They in turn offer our students the opportunity to become directly involved in its program. Our students are now starkly aware of the magnitude of services offered by the ARC. The staff has been inserviced on the inner workings and services the ARC offers so that they, too, are much more aware of its purpose. Red Cross personnel have discovered the creativity of our students. Our computer club developed a database for an analysis of information gathered by the Blood Bank during the Christmas season.

The Red Cross has made a special effort to recognize our students for all kinds of accomplishments and regularly displays artwork from Jarrett. They also presented plaques to student workers and top students in our honors assembly. I think the neatest project that we worked with them on this year was the bloodmobile held here at Jarrett. This was the first junior high sponsored bloodmobile in this area. Kids had to go out and recruit adults to give blood, which really involved a large portion of our community. It will be an ongoing service project in the years ahead.

The above responses are from representatives of only a few of Springfield's 59 partnerships currently operating in its Adopt-a-School program. Many others could add their own evaluative testimonies. But there is no way we can measure precisely the influence of a program that reaches out to so many in the community. What we can say is that it has the potential for touching the lives of some 23,400 students and 2,200 staff in the Springfield Public Schools. It has had a positive impact on the total community.

What We Have Learned

In our four years of experience with the Adopt-a-School program, we have learned much about its strengths. Some are quite obvious; others became apparent as the partner relationships developed. We also learned some cautions to take in implementing such programs. In this chapter we share some of these strengths and cautions, which we think will be useful for other school systems that want to establish such a program.

Strengths of the Program

1. It provides a practical vehicle for mobilizing the energy of a community in cooperative endeavors that enhance the education of children and youth.

2. It brings together individuals from different walks of life to work on worthwhile projects, which results in mutual respect and better understanding of the schools.

3. It fosters a spirit of cooperation between the private and public sectors of the community, a spirit that is lacking in many communities.

4. It sends a message about the quality of life in a community to families and businesses that are considering locating in the community.

5. It provides a productive way for people to develop citizenship skills by participating in a worthwhile community service.

6. It communicates the idea that public education is a shared responsibility. Working on a successful project fosters a "we" spirit.

7. It provides students with a host of resources in the form of expertise, talent, and experiences not normally available in the classroom.

8. It helps to change public attitudes about the schools when people can really see and understand what is happening in classrooms. Today, with fewer people with children in school, there is less direct contact with the schools. Partnership programs bring some of these people back into the schools. They become more supportive, even lobbying legislators, when the time comes to vote for increased funding for education.

9. It presents a positive image of the business community as being interested in the well-being of the community, not just motivated by profit.

10. It provides participating businesses with one form of advertising. Parents of children in a partnership school are likely to seek out the goods and services of the partner firm.

11. It provides many opportunities to recognize individual accomplishments of both students and adults.

12. It provides those persons who assume the liaison responsibility for the program with valuable experience in developing their organizational and management skills.

13. It helps students to become aware of a range of career choices.

Some Cautions

Although we have taken a strong advocacy position for school-business partnerships, there are some cautions that need to be mentioned. Being aware of them will avoid trouble down the road.

Business executives may be skeptical about entering a partnership because they think it is a ploy by schools to ask for money. Or they may be reluctant to release employees to work on school projects. Teachers and administrators may be reluctant to have outsiders in their classrooms, fearing they will interfere with ongoing curriculum. Also, a successful partnership requires careful planning and constant two-

way communication. With these cautions in mind, a school district should consider the following guidelines for establishing a partnership program:

1. When initiating a partnership with a business, be sure to get a commitment from the chief executive officer. That person alone can make the decisions and direct the necessary resources, including personnel, to make the program work. Needless to say, there also must be the same level of commitment from the board of education and the superintendent.

2. In identifying the projects or activities to undertake, each school's partnership committee should strive for a balance of ongoing activities to maintain the momentum of the program and an occasional one-time, big, splashy activity that will garner good publicity.

3. Planning should be done early, thoroughly, and often. After ample discussion, the partnership committee should list the activities planned for the year with target dates for accomplishment. These plans should be reviewed monthly with alterations made as needed.

4. Each partnership committee should sit down together at the end of the school year and evaluate its program for the year. At this time changes can be suggested and decisions made for the coming year.

5. The best programs are those that develop slowly and grow steadily. Solid success with a few activities is better than taking on too many and failing.

6. Keep in mind that program success depends on involvement of people. If a business offers only money for a partnership project without any investment of its personnel, then many of the purposes of the partnership are not fulfilled.

Solid partnership programs require careful planning at the startup stage and constant monitoring and refinement along the way. Much can be accomplished through such a program for the benefit of all. No school district should be without such a program.

Conclusion

The school-business partnership program is working in Springfield, Missouri, and in many other communities across the country. At a time when reform of public education is receiving so much attention, the partnership concept deserves a prominent place on the reform agenda. Corporate America, from the industrial giants to the family business, has much to contribute to our public schools. The greatest resource businesses can provide is not so much material things as it is their involvement and interest.

Smaller school systems in towns without a large business community might question whether they can implement an Adopt-a-School program. They can. Every community has service clubs, social agencies, and local government offices that might serve as partners. All it takes is some initiative by educators to make the initial contact, sell the idea, and follow through with planning, monitoring, and evaluating the program.

Comments heard from some of the partners in Springfield's Adopt-a-School program indicate they are having so much fun with it that they would not think of quitting. Others have said that the idea is so simple and yet so profound, it should have been thought of years ago. It is a good idea. It is productive. It has a lot of possibilities. There is much more yet to be accomplished. More businesses must be brought in, more resources made available to students. Eventually, each school should have multiple partners, depending upon its size.

Springfield has made a good start. We stand ready to help other school districts to do the same.

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